

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For the week ending SAT, November 8, 2003

By Dave Mears

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Running a little bit behind in gathering, assessing and summarizing the news this month, but should be up to date again shortly.)

THE WEEK'S TOP NEWS (in chronological order):

(MON) A Union Pacific freight train derailed 25 cars near Sheldon, IA., approximately 55 miles northeast of Sioux City. No injuries were reported in the accident. The cause of the derailment was still under investigation at press time. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) The New York City Transit Authority marked the final run of its "Redbird" subway cars with a ceremony at its Times Square station. The cars, which once totaled 1,300 in number, earned their nickname when they were painted red to combat graffiti vandals in the 1980s. Built in the 1960s, the cars were the last to be equipped with tear-shaped metal grab holds for standing "straphanger" passengers. NYCTA officials said that 6 of the cars would be preserved for possible future use in television commercials and movie shoots. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(TUE) Voters in Houston, TX. approved a referendum authorizing \$640 million in revenue bonds for the purpose of expanding the city's light rail system by an additional 22 miles. The system will begin operating its initial 7.5 miles of line this coming January. Also on this Election Day 2003, San Francisco County voters approved the continuation of a cent transportation sales tax, which officials said would provide \$2.35 billion in transit-related improvements over a 30 year period. (ffd: NARP, Railway Age)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that it had entered into an agreement with Greenbrier Management Services to manage its freight car repair billing. Under the agreement, Greenbrier will generate and distribute invoices for repairs performed by BNSF freight shops to foreign and private freight cars and, also, handle dispute resolution related to receivable and payable billings. (ffd: BNSF Corp., Greenbrier Corp.)

(THU) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration issued a "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" related to requiring reflective materials on the sides of freight cars. Commenting on the proposal, FRA Administrator Allan Rutter said, "We believe this proposal can help increase train conspicuity at poorly illuminated [rail-highway] crossings - particularly passively signed crossings - during periods of darkness or limited visibility." The FRA is now soliciting public comment to shape the specifics of the proposed new rules. (ffd: USDOT)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that it would spend \$1.95 billion in capital improvements in 2004, up from a projected \$1.725 billion in capital improvements in 2003. A BNSF spokesman said that the increase resulted from additional locomotive acquisitions planned for next year, which are to total 350 units. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(THU) Canadian Pacific Railway announced plans to operate its fifth annual U.S. and Canadian "Holiday Trains." A CPR official said that the trains, which are decorated with thousands of lights and include a boxcar converted for stage shows, have helped raise over \$1 million and have collected over 160 tons of food for charities during the last 4 years. The U.S. train will start its U.S. tour December 3 in Scranton, PA. and the Canadian train will start its Canadian tour December 6 in St. Therese, PQ. (ffd: CPR Corp.)

(FRI) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved the absorption of CSX's New York Central Lines subsidiary and the absorption of Norfolk Southern's Pennsylvania Lines subsidiary into CSX and NS, respectively. The subsidiaries were set up to facilitate various financial consequences of CSX and NS's co-purchase of the former Conrail in 1999. In their ruling, the STB noted that Shared Assets, the Conrail remnant terminal company, is unaffected by these absorptions. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Canadian National announced plans to build 100 boxcars additional to the 100 already under construction at its Transcona Shops in Winnipeg, MB. A CN spokesman said that the cars would be used in paper product service and will be of 58-foot, 286,000 lb., Plate F capacity. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Board of Directors voted to increase the base fare for a Boston, MA. bus or subway ride from \$1 to \$1.25. A spokesman for the board said that, in spite of the increase, the fare remains the lowest among the nation's major transit systems. The board also established a Rider Oversight Committee to gather concerns of MBTA riders and then present them to MBTA's senior management for appropriate action. (ffd: MBTA, Railpace)

(SAT) Washington State's Sound Transit broke ground to mark the start of construction on a new 14 mile light rail line. The "Central Link" line, which will extend from Westlake Center in Seattle to Tukwila, WA., is expected to open for service in mid-2009. (ffd: NARP)

(SAT) Model train builder Lionel and the B&O Railroad Museum announced the availability of a limited edition model boxcar supporting the museum's Roundhouse Restoration Fund. The model boxcar is designed in "B&O Sentinel Service" livery and is numbered "021703", the date the museum's roundhouse roof collapsed under a record Baltimore, MD. snowfall. The model boxcar may be acquired by telephone order or online via the museum's website, www.borail.org. (ffd: B&O Railroad Museum)

STATS:

(SUN) For the week ending November 1, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 4.1 percent from the comparable week last year, up 5.4 percent in the East and up 3.0 percent in the West. Also for the week ending November 1, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 3.3 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 12.4 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.0 percent.

For the month of October, 2003, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.6 percent, compared with October, 2002. Notable traffic increases included coke up 46.6 percent, crushed stone and gravel up 7.8 percent and grain up 5.1 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 15.3 percent, motor vehicles and equipment down 1.3 percent and coal down 0.7 percent. Also for the month of October, 2003, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 18.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 6.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 2.4 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 8.0 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 9.3 percent, all when ranked with October, 2002.

For the period January 1 through November 1, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.1 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.5 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.7 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 2.0 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 14.7 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Burlington Northern Santa Fe granted temporary trackage rights to Union Pacific over approximately 3 miles of BNSF line near Endicott, NE. The purpose of the trackage rights is to permit UP to temporarily serve a shipper at Endicott while the BNSF tracks to that shipper customarily used by UP are repaired. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Norfolk Southern granted trackage rights to CSX over approximately 21 miles of NS lines in and near Cincinnati, OH. The purpose of the trackage rights is to allow CSX and NS to institute directional running over portions of each others lines in the Cincinnati area. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Providence & Worcester filed to abandon a portion of its Southbridge Running Track between Webster, MA. and Southbridge, MA., totaling approximately 11 miles. (ffd: STB)

(WED) RailAmerica announced the sale of the San Pedro & Southwestern Railroad to a consortium headed by shortline entrepreneur David Parkinson. The SPSR operates approximately 68 miles of line between Benson, AZ. and Douglas, AZ. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. (ffd: Railway Age)

PERSONNEL CHANGES:

(WED) CSX announced that Michael Giftos, its EVP and Chief Commercial Officer, would retire effective March 31, 2004. A CSX spokesman also announced that Mr. Giftos would turn over his responsibilities at that time to Clarence Gooden, who is currently CSX's SVP-Merchandise Service Group. (ffd: CSX Corp.)

(WED) The Bush Administration announced the nomination of William Douglas Buttrey and Francis Patrick Mulvey to fill the 2 existing vacancies on the U.S. Surface Transportation Board. Mr. Buttrey was previously Senior Government Affairs Representative for Federal Express Corporation and was earlier Committee Counsel for the U.S. Senate Aviation Committee. Mr. Mulvey is currently the Democratic Staff Director for the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. (ffd: AAR)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Sunday or Monday, to the rail and transit industries and those interested in them. Send an e-mail to weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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